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AUTHOR Kuvlesky, William P.
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ABSTRACT

An impressionistic, interpretative analysis of information from direct observation, known informants, and interviews provides a picture of the life situation of Spanish American youth living in rural Taos County, New Mexico. Northern Taos County has experienced dramatic social change over the last several decades, altering the traditional, folk-type, village-centered society. The majority live better physically and economically than they did before; more are affluent and better educated. Still, forces producing these benefits have also gutted the villages of their cohesive structures, reducing them to relatively atomized clusters of kin groups interspersed with increasing numbers of Anglo strangers. The life situation of youth has changed dramatically as well. The young people are oriented predominantly toward informal peer associations of extremely limited local and ethnic nature. Major ties to larger social systems are through television and school classes. They hold liberal attitudes toward sexual activity and begin using alcohol and "pot" at a relatively early age. They neither attend church regularly nor consider themselves particularly religious. While they like their communities, all want to leave, at least temporarily, when they finish school. They are uncertain about their futures and tend to think nobody cares about them, their needs and aspirations. (NEC)

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YOUTH IN NORTHERN TAOS COUNTY, NEW MEXICO: NO ONE CARES*

William P. Kuvlesky

Texas A & M University

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A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

During my early socialization into the discipline of sociology I became an extremely bare-faced empiricist. I can recall one of my early traumatic experiences, when defending a Master's thesis based on secondary data gathered by my Chairman, being asked why I didn't offer interpretations of my findings. Unsuccessfully I tried to insist that "the facts should speak for themselves." Later, still abstract but now in a theoretical sense, I remember how I admired one of my favorite professor's statements about theoretically oriented survey research, "I don't want to meet my subjects - to get personally involved - this would hinder my objectivity!" How convenient these perspectives are to simplifying the practice of sociology. In all honesty, I do not embrace either of these inclinations at present; however, I find the struggle to use sociology to gain understandings that can be productive for humanity a continuing one. I don't intend this paper to be just another formal report of normal, sociological research. My intention here is to share a personal research experience and what it produced.

It is my sincerest desire that this "personal research" be productive in several different respects. First, to let my good friends among the youth of northern Taos County know that there are people who do care about them and their problems. Secondly, to provide an understanding of these youths' situation that will serve to help them better cope with their problems and meet their own self defined needs. And, lastly, to provide an honest, accurate description of the life situation and perceived needs of these rural youths to assist anyone desiring to be informed about them.

I have spent most of my research career in Sociology studying rural and minority youth in Texas, utilizing predominantly survey techniques. Over the last decade I have been actively involved in pursuing several different lines of research involving problems of Mexican Americans in Southern Texas (Medina and Kuvlesky, 1976). This year I received a sabbatical leave and decided to use it to develop a broader perspective toward minority group studies and to expand my capabilities in utilizing different research techniques, particularly in reference to field observation.

While pursuing my research on Mexican American populations in Texas I came across writings pertaining to the Spanish Americans living in Northern New Mexico. It seemed that these Spanish speaking people were somewhat different culturally and socially from the Mexican American populations located in Texas. Wanting to become familiar with a broader array of rural areas and people, I elected to spend several weeks observing small, relatively rural communities in Northern New Mexico. I was looking for an informal, but instructive "research experience." Consequently, I entered Northern Taos County as a complete stranger, lacking any prior preparations or facilitation for carrying out my observations. My intention was to approach this investigation from a ethnomethodological perspective, relying on direct observation, selected intensive personal interviews, and key informants. I would attempt to follow Max Weber's "verstehen" principle, probing into motives for social actions as well as noting the probability of their patterned occurrences. My analysis of the observations to be gathered during this short period of time would be of the "interpretive" style rather than the more normal, at least for me, quantitative style predominant in the social sciences today.

Impressions I had of the Spanish speaking populations in Northern New

Mexico were gained from reading several books and from conversations with my good friend, Clark Knowlton, who has demonstrated particular interest in problems of the Spanish American people in this area (Sanchez, 1967; Knowlton, 1961; Coles, 1975). These impressions led me to believe I would be in contact with a rather traditional cultural configuration, somewhat isolated from main stream contemporary American society. I visualized small villages made up of adobe structures, surrounded by small domestic animals. And I imagined people with relatively low levels of education, perhaps speaking English poorly, and living through cycles of poverty one generation after another. My impression was that these people maintained themselves essentially through marginal farming operations, combined with some kind of supplementary employment in the "internal colonialism system," perpetuated by Anglo businessmen. I anticipated that I might run across some extremely militant youth, perhaps Brown Berets. These impressions probably fit pretty well the general stereotypes existing about the people living in this area of our country. At the same time, I had read the more recent work of Nancie Gonzalez (1967), which caused me to wonder if, perhaps, some of these reading-based impressions were still valid. Had the rural Spanish Americans disappeared into a more general Hispanic set of urban ethclasses?

OBJECTIVES AND LIMITATIONS

I set two specific goals for my investigation of northern Taos County: (1) to obtain an understanding of the life situation of the Spanish American youth living in the rural areas there, and (2) to develop an understanding of the nature of interethnic relations existing among the three distinct ethnic groups living there (i.e. Spanish Americans, Native Americans, and Anglos). However, in this paper I will focus on an analysis of the life situations of the Spanish American youth I observed and interviewed. In this regard, I

had established as a high priority goal, before arriving in the field, to attempt to achieve an understanding of how these rural youth were tied into or organizationally linked with the structures of the community and the larger society. Also, I was particularly interested in exploring whether or not so-called formal "youth organizations" were of significance in this respect.

To be honest I am not practiced at analysis of data of the type I gathered for this study - direct observations, information from key informants, and information from intensive but loosely structured direct interviews. While I am inclined to think that it would be good from a scientific perspective to provide each type of observation in separate sets (my strict empiricist heritage is showing), I think it makes more sense to integrate these observations around substantive foci (i.e., "youth organizations" or the "significance of the church") making explicit to the extent possible the sources of my observations. This integrative approach to the analysis of the observations will provide a more coherent understanding of the rural youth and their communities; although it might not provide as good an explicit assurance of the validity of the generalizations developed. Another advantage to this "integrative" approach is that it helps provide "cover" for my informants and respondents - not an unimportant consideration given my relationship to them and understandings I have with them.

I am wise enough to realize the severe limitations faced by a lone observer working for a short period in a strange setting. On the other hand, I do believe it is possible for a disciplined observer, with good conceptual tools, to develop significant insights and understandings of social situations, given a commitment to do so. My greatest reservations about this interpretive analysis is not in the validity of my data or interpretations, but, rather in their completeness. Only more observations would meliorate this short-coming.

THE STUDY AREA

Taos County

The total population of Taos County is about 17.5 thousand people of which over 85% have Spanish surnames and speak Spanish. The town of Taos, located in the southern end of the county, is the largest place - it is just about 2,500 people, the only urban place. Less than 10% of the population is involved in farming. Most of the area of the county is sparsely populated - large hunks of it are in the National Forest and privately owned large ranches. Most of the population is clustered in about two dozen towns and villages, ranging from Taos (2,500) to villages with no more than 10-15 households. These are usually located in the small valleys bordering the permanent streams - availability of water is a critical concern here. Outside of the tourist industry (fishing lodges, ski resorts, and etc.) the only major industry appears to be the molybedenum mine outside of Questa. These two industries provide much of the employment opportunities for people living in the small villages. Except for several wealthy, large ranchers, few of the villagers are involved in farming, and of these few, none subsists entirely on farming for a living. Surprisingly, it is a very rural but not a predominantly agricultural area. It was in the northern part of the county that I decided to focus my investigation.

Lying north of the town of Taos, between the deep gorge of the Rio Grande River on the west and the highest range of mountains in New Mexico on the east, is Northern Taos County, New Mexico. It is a land of contrasts in topography, weather and human communities. It holds Taos Pueblo, one of the oldest known (to those of European extraction) communities of Native Americans, where some 1400 "Indians" still live and endure the continuing intrusions of the paleface into their daily lives. The area was first "colonized" by the Spanish in the

late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They located first in Taos, in the southern part of the county, but over the centuries they gradually fanned out North, East and finally West (across the deep chasm of the Rio Grande) as their numbers grew and available land grew scarce. In the process interethnic marriage was a common occurrence and the two ethnic groups fused biologically, producing the "mestizo" people and way of life that represents the heritage of those labeled "Spanish Americans" in this area today.

During this century the "Anglo" Americans discovered this area and came in two separate waves to settle and establish their dominance over it. First, came the ranchers, miners, and lumber interests in relatively small numbers - these are the old "Anglos" you hear about today. More recently, over the last 30 years, a much larger and significant (often transitory) wave of Anglo in-migration has occurred. These are the tourists who come to use the beauty and natural endowments of the mountains and valley streams, and those other Anglos of more permanent residence who have come to provide them with the tourist services. They have built entire Anglo tourist towns - Red River and Eagle's Nest - in the heart of the most beautiful areas of the mountains. These little outposts of modern "Anglo" society maintain little contact with the older communities; however, they do provide some jobs for the local populations, particularly during the ski season. Perhaps, this new Anglo invasion represents the greatest force of change to impact on this area since the Spanish first came some 300 years ago. In the summer the National Forest is crowded with campers and trout-fishers - cars with Texas license plates seem to predominate even over those from New Mexico on the state highways and park roads. In the winter people come from the northeast, the west coast, as well as Texas to use some of the finest ski slopes to be found. New, modern vacation homes and lodges are springing up continuously like mushrooms

in a pasture after a warm rain.

These intrusions of the modern affluent society are even beginning to sprout in the relatively isolated and, until now, culturally homogenous villages of the Spanish speaking Mestizos. The land was never very good for farming and there never was enough water. Now the pressure of the Anglo intruders has sent the value of the land in the small valley towns spiralling upward - some say it's worth $7,000 an acre or more. The Spanish American villagers resist selling, even though many struggle just to put meat on their tables. The "Land" is connected to the family - it symbolizes the endurance and continuity of family ties. There is a deep affection for the "Land". But, its value will continue to increase and taxes will rise out of proportion to the income of the native population. How long can these proud but not affluent villagers hold this treasure?

Three Villages

After several days of driving around and eye-balling the targeted area for study, I selected three particular towns to concentrate my attention on: Arroyo Hondo, San Cristobal and Valdez. The three communities were similar in a number of respects (see Table 1). All were old residence areas, first settled perhaps 200 years ago. They were predominantly Spanish American - no more than a handful of Anglo families lived in the two smaller places and they were of very recent vintage (in-migrants during the past decade). None had a complete school system, and only Arroyo Hondo had any school at all, an elementary school. The children from all three towns traveled to Taos for high school education. None hada resident priest; although each had a church that the villagers maintained. In each case, the priest from Arroyo Seco visited the church once a week for about an hour to say Mass - and, also on major holidays (i.e., Easter and Christmas). Arroyo Hondo and Valdez had

Table 1. Relevant Communities in the Northern Taos County Study Area

A. Study Communities	Households	Spanish Americans	Schools
Arroyo Hondo	200	85%	Grade School
San Cristobal	35	85%	None
Valdez	40	95%	None

B. Other Relevant Communities	Households	Spanish Americans	Schools
Questa	300	80%	High School
Arroyo Seco	200	90%	Grade School

All figures given above are rough estimates and do not refer to actual, precise counts. The villagers could not give consistent estimates. Additional information on the population of Taos County and its subdivisions obtained from the 1970 U.S. Census is provided in APPENDIX-A.

recently received money from the county to install dual purpose (tennis and basketball) courts. Supposedly, this was the first help they had received of this nature. As far as I could tell these were the only facilities available for youth recreation. Surprisingly, they seemed to be used little by local youth.

Most of the employed adults worked outside of these communities - in Taos, at the mine outside Questa, or in the ski areas located to the east. Few were involved in farming, and, those that were usually were part-time farmers holding an average of 40 or 50 acres. In San Cristobal I was told only three or four families were in farming. Still, when water was available most families would have a garden. In Valdez the old, traditional pattern of long, small, linear family plots stretching from the stream to the mountain-side was still in evidence - these were usually only a few acres. Sheep and goats were the common livestock observable. A similar situation could be observed along the stream in Arroyo Hondo, although the plots were larger here.

Another commonality shared by the three communities existed in reference to housing. In all three cases housing units varied tremendously in type and affluence. Certainly, none of the towns were exclusively housing poverty families: an obvious broad range of SES was apparent in each. Two particular patterns impressed me. First, was the lack of old adobe structures that were inhabited. Many small old ones stand in various stages of crumbling ruins, testifying that not too long ago this was a dominant style of housing. Some new (larger) ones are being built. What has taken their place? Mobile homes - they are all over this area - 30 or more in Arroyo Hondo, about 15 in San Cristobal, and a dozen in Valdez. Questa and Arroyo Seco are peppered with them. I asked several young people about this. It's convenience they say - a good home at low cost and it's easy to get financed. One could also note

that they are "mobile"!

Community Organization?

Another thing that these towns share in common is a lack of community-wide organizational structures. As far as I could ascertain there were no local government structures within the villages, except for the "Water Board". This is a group of elected men who control the rate and amount of distribution of the water from the stream for private use in irrigation. The "foreman" or "ditch boss" is appointed by the board to oversee this sharing operation. Again, one notes how critical water is in the lives of these residents. In none of the three communities does the church appear to provide the bonds to cement the families into a community unit. Perhaps, it did at one time, but not since the villages lost the ability (or right) to maintain their own priests. A similar situation exists in reference to the schools - they have been uprooted from the local community and are under the control of a higher level of organization.

What is left? Well, San Cristobal has a "Community Center" housed in what was their old school; however, it is more a set of specific and changing funded assistance programs than a community-wide organization as far as I could tell. Each of the communities have at least one business establishment: Valdez has a small bar; San Cristobal has a single general store/motel/post office combination; and Arroyo Hondo has a rather large bar, a small take-out restaurant (adjoining the bar) and a small store/gas station combination. Perhaps the two bars come as close as anything to being a community-wide organization. At least most of the adult male population will pass through the bar in a given week - it serves as a communication device.

To be honest one has to conclude that these three communities lack any

kind of organizational structure. They appear to be atomized into small, unconnected kin units with possible transitory factions superimposed over these. The loss of the church and the schools from these communities seems to have gutted them organizationally. And, nothing has evolved to take the place of these lost institutional patterns. On several occasions, as I talked with several older and respected members of the villages, they made the point that it was difficult to get anything done in their towns because there was no organization to get it done with. "How can we get a place for the kids to dance or shoot pool? Who will do it?" In Arroyo Hondo one leader (who lives elsewhere now) is trying to use county government as a means. But few think this will work.

Interethnic Relations

It seemed very clear that in the two smaller places, which also were more isolated than Arroyo Hondo, the few Anglo residents present were in the town but not of it. They were relatively affluent professionals from Taos who came home to the village at night but did not interact with the native villagers. There appeared to be no ethnic hostility explicitly observable - it was more like mutual avoidance. The ethnic groups lived in close physical proximity but in relative social isolation. In Arroyo Hondo, at least on the east side of town ("the better side") where most of the Anglos lived at first, there seemed to be more interethnic contact. At the same time, I was told several times that the poorer Spanish American people on the west side of town did not care for the Anglos at all. They particularly didn't care for the newest, very recent, wave of Anglos building fancy, expensive homes along the northern edge of the west side of town, replacing the ruins of old adobe dwellings abandoned several decades ago.

In one of the smaller villages I met a young Anglo married couple who were operating a summer program for pre-school aged kids. Although the husband had lived "in" the village for several years he appeared to know little about the native people. Later, after we became friends, I asked him about this. He said it was true - "we never have been accepted here". He speculated it might be because they purchased some of the "Land" of the village. On my last visit he asked if I would tell him some of what I had learned. I did and he was grateful. As I moved to leave he said, "We have learned more about San Cristobal from you than from all the time we've lived here. Maybe it is easier because you are an outsider." As we shook hands in parting I thought to myself, "What a shame. The Anglo couple and the Spanish American villagers I met would like each other and be good for each other - if only they cared enough to find out."

The situation in the other small village was somewhat more extreme. It appeared they had little contact with Anglos within the boundaries of their village. What little contact they did have was of a negative nature with those they labeled, "Hippies." I think this referred to a wide spectrum of Anglo youth, including a communal group who had bought some land from a local resident (referred to as "crazy man") up on the mountain behind the village. These intruders seemed to be particularly resented by the young men of the village because they fenced and posted their land - an area that was thought of for generations as a communal hunting area for the village. I heard here and at the other villages that there was considerable conflict between "hippies" and villagers during the height of the counter-culture youth movement a few years earlier. I'm not sure that this was simply dislike of Anglos; for instance, I was not seen as an intruder and seemed to be accepted well, even though I coundn't use Spanish.

Except for the case of the "Hippies," the Spanish Americans I encountered in these three villages did not appear to have hostility toward Anglos. I think if an Anglo could speak Spanish he or she would be readily accepted; otherwise they would be ignored. By the way, every person I met and talked with in the study area was bilingual - all spoke Spanish and I never met one who could not converse well in English, even among the older generations. It is true that there appeared to be a direct correlation between age and degree of Spanish accent observed - the young people had no noticeable Spanish accent.

Before leaving the topic of interethnic relations, I should mention briefly something about the nature of Native American-Spanish American contacts. I suppose it is a well known fact that most of the Spanish American people in this area have Indian blood in their ancestry. Yet I was told frequently, and observed directly on occasion, that the two ethnic groups had only superficial contact with each other. Again, I noted no explicit hostility between the two groupings - only social distance and generally a state of social isolation that seemed to be mutually appreciated. Perhaps at least three factors account for this situation: (1) they each speak a different primary language (although both <u>can</u> use English), (2) they are residentially segregated, and (3) the Spanish American tends to generally view the Native American as having lower social prestige.

In summary, the three resident ethnic groups in the study area seem to have only superficial contacts with each other - social isolation appears to be the best general description of their relationships.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE

In this section of the paper I will use fictitious names as covers for my subjects and, in addition, attempt not to pin-point their identity by providing too thorough and precise descriptions of them. To the best of my ability I will protect their identities and assure them the confidentiality I promised them.

In reporting my results from the field study I will move through a historical overview of the situation of the young people in this area of New Mexico as follows: (1) the recent past - the period immediately after World War II when many of the present parents of young people were themselves children; (2) the immediate past - the period of the late sixties when many of those who are now young adults were teen-agers; and, finally, (3) the present. Obviously, the number and diversity of observations I have increase as we move toward the present. This strategy will provide the historical perspective I think is necessary to appreciate the direction and rate of the substantial social change that has taken place in the life situations of youth generally in this area over just one generation.

A good historical overview of the "Taoseños" (Spanish Americans of Taos County), including the period prior to World War II, is provided by Sanchez (1967: Chpt. IV). However, Professor Sanchez in his "1967 preface" to this classic study first published in 1940 is perhaps a bit too fond of his earlier results to recognize what appears from the perspective of some of the current residents to be a rather drastic and substantial change - a general improvement in life circumstances since the forties.

My information for the period immediately after the Second World War was obtained from several key informants now in their late thirties and early forties. In addition I picked up bits and pieces of collaborating evidence

from discussions with parents of some of the young people I interviewed and in conversations with older people in the three communities.

One of these key informants, let's say his name is Raul B., was reared in one of the three study villages and is presently in his mid to late thirties. He spent some time in the service and did a tour in Europe. Also, he worked in Albuquerque as a laborer in building construction for a period of time, earning $6 an hour on a union job. He came back to his home village several years ago and now works as a bartender in the village bar. After I had conversed with him on three or four different occasions, we became very friendly and shared our general life experiences. During one of these B.S. sessions Raul became quite interested in trying to explain to me how much things differ now from when he was growing up in the area. The following is the essence of what he related to me. Until Route 3 was paved about 25 years ago there was not much traffic to this part of Taos County. The residents seldom saw outsiders and had a difficult time traversing the local roads during wet periods in the summer and during the snowy period of winter. In other words, they were quite isolated. At this time, Taos was similar to the present Arroyo Hondo or Questa - a small, rural market center. There weren't many employment opportunities for the residents of this area and most of them got by through subsistence agriculture and by participating in seasonal migration to provide agricultural labor in states to the west and north. For instance, Raul's father, would spend 4 or 5 months every summer away from his family herding sheep in Wyoming. Raul tried to impress upon me the difficulties this presented for the family and young people left behind. He felt it was particularly hard for the mothers and older children who had to bear major responsibilities for maintenance of the household and family while the father was gone. He gave me the impression that there wasn't much time

or concern for leisure uses of time for young people during this period. They were primarily involved in work, either in household tasks, in the subsistence agriculture enterprise, or in attempts to eke out some supplementary cash by performing periodic, part-time wage labor for larger farmers. According to Raul, it was during the fifties, after the paving of Route 3 and when Taos started to grow and develop as a tourist center, that employment opportunities became available in the area so that the adults (his father, for instance) did not have to migrate out of the home residence area to earn a living.

Another key informant, let's call him Carlos G., who was in his forties, had migrated to Denver shortly after leaving high school because there was no opportunity for jobs here. Carlos had worked at various jobs in Denver, managing a subsistence level style of life for his wife and their three young children. As the children grew to be of school age Carlos became concerned about raising them in the metropolitan environment of Denver. I assume here that they were probably living in a relatively unattractive, lower working-class community, perhaps even a racially mixed one. Carlos had become aware of the substantial changes that had occurred in his native area. Consequently, about six or seven years ago he decided to move his family back to Northern Taos County. He admits to the fact that there are some advantages to living in Denver as compared with this village in Taos County. But at the same time he believes very strongly that it is better for his kids here. Presently he can earn a decent living in this area working at the mine and he enjoys living here very much. In his own words, "This is a good place to raise a family. And I don't have to drive around camping at parks or visiting picnic grounds. I have one in my own backyard and I can see the beautiful mountains and the forest as I sit there eating my dinner. I can walk up the mountain and catch 'natural' trout."

It seems that a number of this generation served in the armed forces probably with the idea they would never return to their native village. However, a substantial number of them, upon returning from the armed forces, found it possible to develop a relatively affluent level of living in the area. They speak of the dramatic changes that have occurred and how this has favored their desire to remain in this geographical location, and at the same time live a decent life. At least a few of the more prominent men I have run across in several of the villages had established small business enterprises in Taos that were successfully developed and returning good income for their families. While Carlos felt he was "lucky" to have a job at the mine, I have heard these self-made businessmen argue that job opportunities are good here -- "As long as you're willing to work" (for $2.50 or $3.00 an hour). These people are the ones living in the new large adobe houses or some of the other large, relatively expensive dwellings dispersed through the village areas. Of course there probably were many who left and only return to this area periodically for family visits - I met several of these.

Young Adults Look Back to Adolescence

Intensive interviews with several young adults in their mid-twenties and discussions of varying lengths with others provide a picture of what the daily life of these youth were like a short decade or so ago. These young residents perceive some change in the life situations experienced by youth living in the villages over the past ten years. For instance, one respondent, let's call him Tom S., said to me:

> "It is different now. We went to school right here in the village. The old teacher still lives here, up on the hill - she's retired now. She taught my mother too. We couldn't use Spanish in school - we were hit if we did. The school changed our names from Spanish to English - that's why we all have English first names. That's the way the teachers were taught to do it - to make us a success."

These observations were supported by others I talked with. Although I think they are referring in this case to their early school days - maybe 20 years past.

Tom S. was a very open and talkative young man who now works some 100+ miles away as a power technician in Colorado, but comes home every week-end. He spent two years at New Mexico State studying to be a forester but couldn't tolerate school. His father is one of the few active farmers in his village but supplements his income through practice of a skilled craft. Tom has two older siblings. Tom recalls his adolescent years quite clearly - they appear pleasant years looking back on them. His days were filled with outdoor activities - work on the farm or around the house, hunting and fishing, and outdoor parties with peers. He said there were no youth organizations in the villages, and that in his time the local teen-agers didn't participate much in school activities. He never belonged to any school clubs or participated in any school sport. He tells me, "I never missed these youth groups - with television you could enjoy staying home." I asked Tom if he would like to live here - it was a foolish question. There is little doubt that he would, except he couldn't make enough money to satisfy his needs (a large new pick-up and a Camaro, for instance). He no longer thinks of becoming a forester and he's not sure about farming - maybe. Tom tells me there was never much interaction between the village kids and the Indians, not even in school in Taos. He thinks it is language that keeps them apart: "They have their own language - it is only spoken!" I note that Tom speaks Spanish with his mother and father, but they all speak English to me. The parents have a noticeable, but not strong, Spanish accent - Tom has none.

Several days after my lengthy visit with Tom S. I had occasion to visit with another young man about the same age, let's call him Robert. He was

also the son of one of the few farmers around (he ran about a dozen head of beef cattle on about 40 acres). It would be too redundant to mention in detail the comments he made about his youth in the village - they are essentially identical to those of Tom S. in most respects. But Robert grew up in the heart of the small village, while Tom's farm was separated some distance from his village. Robert appeared to be more locally oriented, but this could be because he was presently residing in the village (directly across the road from his parents house, in a small adobe home) with his young wife and small son. Robert had gone to college at the University of New Mexico and needed only one semester to graduate. He left two years ago because he "had money problems." He pursues his vocation, making a marginal living giving private music lessons, teaching music part-time at a nearby orphanage for Native American kids, and playing in a local dance band. As we were talking, he was unloading dusty books and records from the trunk of his car - he had been storing them there since he left school. Was this his attempt to face up to the sad reality that he would probably never make it back for that last semester?

As I met other people of Tom's and Robert's age, some in from Denver or Santa Fe for a summer visit with parents, I recalled Carlos' remark about being "lucky" to have a job in the mines. Perhaps, things had improved for many in Taos County over the last several decades but, still, there weren't enough good job opportunities around for those who might desire to stay here, particularly if they had relatively high levels of education. Tom traveled 200 miles each week-end - a troublesome compromise. Robert appeared sad and resigned to his fate - I felt sad for him. I began to take notice of the fact that there appeared to be too few people around in this age group. Most probably had moved on to Albuquerque or Denver (those visiting were some of

these). Perhaps some would come back later to rear families as did Carlos. It struck me all of a sudden that while these villages were constantly exporting young, productive Spanish Americans, they were importing - receiving might be a better way of stating it - affluent Anglos. Assuming that this trend continues, one would expect some rather drastic changes in the social composition of the villages over the next several decades. Maybe Nancy's urban Hispanic ethclasses do represent the future of most of these young village people.

Teen-Agers at Present

Most of my time in the field should have been spent with the fine young adolescents I met and came to know in these villages. Certainly my most enjoyable periods were those I spent talking with these open and friendly youth. Intensive, informal interviews were made with six youths of this age, male and female, covering all three villages. It is the privacy and identity of these respondents I desire to protect most of all. Consequently, at this point I will not even use fictitious names or misleading descriptions. Instead, I will try to present a general picture of their life situations, pointing out exceptions and illustrating when possible with selected direct quotes that I recorded.

Youth Groups and School

You will recall that one of my specific objectives in the study was to explore to what extent these rural young people were involved in formal youth organizations. Generally, they were not involved in any formal youth groups located in the villages - there were none. Even in the context of the school, participation in clubs was limited and superficial when it existed (usually subject matter oriented clubs). For instance, one boy belonged to only one

formal group - the vocational agriculture club in school; however, he could not even recall its name ("FFA"). This was characteristic of all respondents but one, a senior girl: she belonged to the choir and had served as a member of student government. They were unaware of any 4-H Club; although, several thought one might exist in Arroyo Hondo. I speculated that if so, it was on the wrong side of Highway 3 ("the better side"). None of these people participated in organized school athletics. "It would be too inconvenient. It gets dark early in the winter and the roads can be difficult to travel." In Arroyo Hondo there is a community basketball team run by the brothers who operate the bar; however, this involves mostly post-high school age young people.

It was hard for me to accept the fact that not even the high school seemed to provide an organizational base (outside of academics) for these young people. I pressed them to find out whether or not they used it for leisure - attending dances, football and basketball games, and etc. Without exception their responses were negative, for the same reasons they didn't participate in sports.

The general orientation toward school was that "it was alright." One of the girls had dropped out this past year, but was hoping to start again this year. Another girl found school enjoyable but tough. All seemed to think the school was providing them with the opportunity for an education; however, only one seemed to take this seriously. Another girl had left school when she became pregnant and had no intentions of returning.

Except for the academic aspects of the school programs, generally the youth had little or no involvement in formal youth organizations of any kind.

Church and Religion

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of my observations was the lack of the young peoples involvement in the "Church". Prior to my visit I had assumed

that traditionally the Spanish Americans of northern New Mexico were very religious and active participants in the Roman Catholic Church. With one exception (the same one as noted above), the young people neither attended church regularly nor considered themselves particularly religious. By the way, Tom S. and Robert had indicated similar information to me about themselves earlier. (My God! These young people exist outside of any formally organized dimension of our society - except for school programs.) It was generally understood that, "Only the older people go to Mass."

It seems quite clear to me that there is a great divergence between the older residents and the young in this regard. Most of the older adults attend Mass regularly and probably consider themselves more than ordinarily religious. The young people are different. Yet, as far as I could tell this wasn't an issue of conflict between parents and children. I got the definite feeling that the parent's participation and sentiments were more acts of homage to a valued past than a sign of sincere, actual religious commitment. The usually empty, lifeless church buildings and the presence of the priest in Arroyo Seco were constant reminders that the church had left the villages. Were the villagers in the process of also leaving the "Church," though it might take several generations to do so?

Clearly, in general the church did not provide an important dimension of social involvement for these young people. Another potential, alternative linkage between them and the larger social system was not being utilized.

Friends and Leisure Activity

The primary context of interaction for these youth, outside of the family, was small peer cliques, usually made up of same sex peers from the local village. These informally organized groups probably were valued above all other associations by most of the youth. Dating, particularly steady dating, did

not appear to enter in as an important social element until the age of 16 or 17 for these youth. Of those I interviewed intensively, ranging in age from 15 to 18, only one - the oldest girl - was dating steady. Even in this case, she was hesitant to label it "steady" dating. It surprised me that these youth indicated they did not date much, except for the two girls who had dropped out of school. Close, continuing personal associations tended to be restricted to these small, homogenous, locally derived, peer cliques for the most part.

Relationships with young people from outside their own village tended to be periodic and superficial - this included school associations. There was some tendency toward dissociative interaction to occur between boys from different towns, but not within the same town. For instance, boys from Arroyo Hondo and Questa tangle on occasion: these two towns have a structured, continuing animosity toward each other that goes back many years. Fighting among boys from different towns appears expected, and is not viewed with a great deal of concern. Some remarks made by my respondents can illustrate this:

(1) "Fighting is fun, it's sport, excitement!"
(2) "We do not fight each other - those here in town - sometimes we go to Questa or Red River looking for fights."
(3) "Yes we like to fight - but not serious, for fun."
(4) "Sometimes I will fight with Anglos who insult me at school."

If the adults don't encourage fighting, they apparently don't work hard at discouraging it. I had read that this "fighting" pattern was related to competition for girls (Gonzalez, 1967). However, my subjects didn't think this was so - they just enjoyed it on occasion. Perhaps, this was their replacement for school sports.

I repeatedly received information from the respondents indicating that most of their friendship relationships were within the ethnic group itself. Few knew any Indian youth very well and most seemed not to care for interaction

with Anglo youth they met in school. Here are some of their comments on this subject:

(1) "Most (Anglos) seem to act uppity - sometimes we fight in school."
(2) "I know one (Anglo) at school who is cool - he's different."
(3) "I don't know any Indians well - none of my friends do either - they keep to themselves."
(4) "All my friends are from here in town."
(5) "My regular dudes keep others away."

Again, the youth's tendency to interact intensively only within the ethnic group appears to be congruent with the more general, prevailing pattern evidenced among adults. For example, on one occasion I sat in a bar filled with people - Anglos, Spanish Americans, and Indians all were present. They segregated themselves out from each other ethnically - each ethnic group using a different language and oblivious to the others even though they were within an arms length. I sat there for an hour and never saw any interethnic contact, outside of ordering drinks from the bartender.

Daily Activities - Leisure

Clearly, one has to view the daily life of these youth in a seasonal context - summer and winter are two different worlds for them. Also, it appears that sex differentiation is somewhat significant in this respect.

Let's consider the summer time first. Perhaps the most prominent and important activity, from the perspective of these youth, that took place during the summer was the periodic, village based, "field party". I got the definite impression that these occurred regularly (on week-ends) in all three villages. These would normally take place in a relatively secluded area, screened from view of the adults in the village by distance, topography, and vegetation. I was shown the place in each town where these were held. What did the youth do at these parties? They enjoyed each other - singing, telling stories. Almost everyone would drink beer and some, perhaps most, would use

"pot". Both girls and boys would be present at these parties; however, generally no heavy sexual interaction would take place. I observed one such "field party" in progress - it took place beside a beautiful, meandering mountain stream on the edge of the village, screened from the nearest road by a high bank. Maybe 15 teen-agers were standing around drinking beer, "smoking", talking and laughing, and generally having a good time.

Moral Behavior: An Aside

Both alcohol and "pot" were easily attainable and most youth used both from a relatively early age. One of my friends, a bartender, estimated that 85% of all youth (teen-agers) used pot. I challenged this, knowing it was an extremely high rate of use. He insisted that if anything it was conservative. My interviews with the youth themselves strongly supported his assertion. At the same time, one of my respondents had never used "pot" and another only tried it - both were girls. Hard drugs were used only by a few and the young people showed strong disapproval of them. The high usage of "pot" might be due to the fact that it was essentially free - they grew what they needed in the mountains. My general impression was that though use of "pot" was widespread, it was not used on a heavy daily basis by most. The consumption of alcohol was a more serious problem in this regard. The information I obtained from the youths indicated there was a normative distinction by sex held by parents in the use of "drugs" - girls were not to use these, not even cigarettes - but nobody seemed to care much if the boys smoked or drank.

I probed into sex activities and found the youth rather liberally oriented in this regard. Most indicated that there wasn't any heavy sex coming down at the field parties, only on a one to one basis. Several adults had indicated to me that there was a serious problem with young, teen-age pregnancies in

one village. Without exception the young people challenged this assertion - "Maybe in Taos but not here". One of the subjects had experienced this, but this was an exception. In carrying back the youths' perceptions to one of my adult informants I received this response, "I don't mean one or two girls, I mean many! This is a serious problem. They watch TV and think they can do anything they want. The parents can't control them or don't care." Going back to one of the girls in this village I asked again if this was a serious problem. She agreed it might be - "Some of the parents don't seem to care." She indicated to me that few girls were told about contraceptives - "usually they don't talk about such things." She told me that once a man had come to the high school to discuss such things with the girls. While she thought this was good and enjoyed it, many girls disliked it and many parents protested. So, it's not done any more.

One very beautiful girl of about 16 (she looked older) who I first met in a bar while she was buying a six-pack, had gotten pregnant and dropped out of school. She had given her baby to her sister. She wasn't working - someone in Taos had tried to help her by giving her a job but it didn't work out. She was living with her mother and just "running around". I talked with one of my informants, an adult male, who knew this girl well. This girl was good looking, obviously bright, articulate, and had a pleasing, outgoing personality. "Couldn't anybody help her?" I asked. "Doesn't anybody care?" I continued. He said, "I care - but what can you do?". What will happen to this girl. He speculated that she might end up in Denver as a prostitute.

The summer presented no great problem for the young people. They worked if they could get a job, and transportation to it. If not, they loafed or hung around talking, playing ball or watching T.V. This is what they said. However, I got the very definite feeling they felt penned in or restrained

and maybe bored. There was too much time and too little alternatives for activity - unless you had a car. And, you need a job to get a car, but you couldn't find a job without having a car! The boys would fish sometimes and on occasion youth of both genders would "go down to the river" to swim.

Winter Activities

In the winter it gets very cold at these high elevations, the roads are often dangerous to travel, night falls early, and besides most of these youth don't have access to cars. There is not much work to do at home and very few have jobs. They don't participate in school activities. But then school consumes much of the day - and they see their friends there. What else do they do? In their own words, "Not much." "Hang around, watch T.V., have snow fights, and sometimes a friend with a car will drive by and holler." They don't get into Taos much outside of school time - they would like to though. My impression is that the winter doesn't drag on them as much as one might expect. Yet, it would be better if they had a place to gather and do things - maybe just a small building (the old school, for instance). Why don't they? "Nobody cares," they seem to think. "Yes, we would love to have this kind of place they say." In talking with one father of one of my subjects, I mentioned that the young people perceived a need for such a place. He pointed to his damp, sagging ceiling board in his cramped trailer and then at the rotting steps in front of his trailer and said angrily, "We all have problems. Who can afford it?" Yes, he cared and maybe felt guilty; however, the kids would interpret the lack of any inclination to act as evidence that no one cares. My impression was that many cared but didn't know what to do or how to go about doing it.

Orientations, Aspirations, and Needs

Most of the young people say they like their communities. Still, all want to eventually move out when they finish school - at least for a while. They seem rather fuzzy about the future, unsure of what they can or will become. Some can tell you what jobs they would like to have - a mechanic, a teacher, a technician, a hunter/mountain man - but few feel certain of having them. It obviously troubles them to think about it. They respect and love their families deep affection, freely expressed, was commonly observed even among similarly aged sibs. But most want to marry later than their parents and have fewer children. Several of the girls indicated that they "didn't want to get tied down" till their mid-twenties. Only one of the six I talked with at length was seriously considering college.

What about the self-determined, priority needs of these youth? In each case I asked them what their biggest problems were. Without exception two things surfaced as prime problems. First, all indicated a need for more freedom of movement - transportation to Taos, a car, a way to get out and do things. This was of strongest concern for the boys. Second, was a need to have more available cash - they were willing to work for it. Of course this problem is not unrelated to the first one. Also, although this was not as close to the conscious surface as the two already mentioned, there was the felt need to have a place to go and do things with peers. Obviously, the lack of direct access to a means of filling this need in the village, contributed to the trapped feeling that pushed the felt need for geographical mobility (having a car) so high.

Of course there were more personal concerns as well. While having wheels was the only major, dominant concern of several of the boys, other youth gave primacy to somewhat unique problems:

(1) "My greatest problem is trying to decide what I want to do - be a secretary or a teacher."
(2) "My biggest problem is getting back into school."
(3) "I need a job, some way to help my family - my mother can't work."

Parents never were mentioned as a major problem. When I probed on this, I tended to get back a reaction indicating that, "Yes, there were some problems - but, we get along. We compromise." A few of the girls thought their parents were too strict - "we can't smoke in front of them", and "I have to be in at 11 p.m." My general impression though was that these stress situations in the parent-child relationship were viewed more as minor irritations than as major, lasting problems.

Several times, in discussion of school or parents, young people mentioned that they didn't feel they got good advice when they wanted it or needed it: "I can't go to anyone - nobody cares."

OVERVIEW

Given the impressionistic, interpretative type of analysis I have attempted to provide from my field observations, I do not intend to develop a comprehensive, systematic general summary or set of conclusions. These are built into the story I had to tell, as I told it, and I want the reader to see these in the context of observations from which they evolved.

Northern Taos County has experienced dramatic social change over the last several decades that has altered forever the traditional, folk-type village centered society that persisted earlier for so long. Certainly, the majority of the people live better in a physical and economic sense than they did before. More of them are affluent and they are increasingly better educated. Still, the forces that produced these good things have also gutted the village of its cohesive structures, reducing it to a relatively atomized cluster of kin groups interspersed with increasing numbers of Anglo strangers. The life situation of youth has changed dramatically as well. The young people are oriented predominantly toward informal peer associations of an extremely limited local and ethnic nature. Their major ties to the larger social system are through the cold linkages of TV and school classes. They have serious problems of adjustment - both from their subjective perspective and from an outsider's more objective stance. They start drinking too early and they drink too much. They are uncertain about their futures and have nobody to go to to get help from. They tend to think nobody cares - about them, their needs, and their aspirations. But many do care - perhaps, not enough.

Can anything be done to help these young people gain a better, more satisfying existence and to face a clearer, more promising future? I think so. However, this activity will have to be initiated from within the towns themselves for the most part. Those outside of them, in the larger cities

and in the various levels of government and their agencies are not likely to be aware of such small places or their problems. Or, if they are, will they be likely to give a high priority to such small numbers? Somehow in some way a new sense of community must evolve along with some new forms of intra-community organization. As some of my subjects said, "Who will do it?" Does anyone care - <u>enough</u> to try?

To observe is to intrude. However little your observations are noticed by those you observed, their acts will be influenced by the fact that you are there. To be an active observer is to intrude substantially. If you have made friends in the process of observing you have been an active observer - I made some friends. And, I gained in other less significant ways from the generosity of my subjects in tolerating my intrusions into their daily lives and the privacy of their thoughts. What did I give in return, besides some tokens of appreciation and fresh trout that my boy, Andy, caught every day? I hope that in my conversations with the young people I gave some direct enjoyment - several indicated explicitly that I had. In my conversations with some of the adults I may have started a process of questioning and thought - one which might lead them to consider ways of serving the felt needs of their young people. With this paper I think I have demonstrated an understanding of the young peoples common life situation that is not widely recognized by them or others. I plan to share this with them and to give them the opportunity to correct any erroneous observations or inferences I have made.

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APPENDIX - A*

TAOS COUNTY SUB-DIVISIONS:

	Population
Arroyo Hondo Division	1,810
Penasco Division	1,263
Picuris Division	1,497
Questa Division	3,134
Questa Village	1,095
Taos Division	7,237
Taos Town	2,475
Taos Pueblo Division	2,219
Taos Pueblo	1,030
Tres Piedras Division	356
Taos County Total Population	17,516
Persons of Spanish Lanugage	14,321
Other Persons of Spanish Surname	788
Persons of Spanish Surname (Total)	15,109
Persons of Spanish Origin or Descent	9,898

* I want to acknowledge the assistance of Lucila Murguia, Research Assistant in Rural Sociology at Texas A&M, in obtaining and tabulating this data.

Taos County, New Mexico

Table 2. Rural Non-Farm

Industry of Employed Persons	No.	%
Total employed, 16 years old and over	4,060	
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries	198	4.73
Construction	281	6.92
Manufacturing	205	5.05
Durable goods	80	1.97
Transportation, communication, and other public utilities	160	3.94
Wholesale and retail trade	711	17.51
Personal services	448	11.03
Professional and related services	916	22.56
Other industries	1,141	28.10

Occupation		%
Male employed, 16 years old and over	2,614	
Professional, technical and kindred workers	485	18.55
Managers and administrators, except farm	342	13.08
Sales workers	96	3.67
Clerical and kindred workers	107	4.09
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers	594	22.72
Operatives, including transport	561	21.46
Labors, except farm	176	6.73
Farmers and farm managers	30	1.15
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	---	
Farm laborers, except unpaid and farm foremen	32	1.22
Service workers, including private household	191	7.31
Female employed, 16 years old and over	1,446	
Professional, technical and kindred workers	297	20.54
Managers and administrators, except farm	99	6.85
Sales workers	90	6.22
Clerical and kindred workers	413	28.56
Operatives, including transport	107	7.40
Other blue-collar workers	21	1.45
Farmers and farm managers	---	
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	---	
Farm laborers, except unpaid and farm foremen	6	.42
Service workers, except private household	282	19.50
Private household workers	131	9.06

Average Income	$6,652 =	
Income Less Than Poverty		
Families	1,366	
%	36.6	
mean income deficit	$1,665 =	

Taos County, New Mexico

Table 3. Rural Farm

Industry of Employed Persons	No.	%
Total employed, 16 years old and over	406	
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	70	17.24
Construction	22	5.42
Manufacturing	53	13.05
Durable goods	9	2.22
Transportation, communication, and other public utilities	31	7.64
Wholesale and retail trade	17	4.19
Personal services	62	15.27
Professional and related services	68	16.75
Other industries	83	20.44
Occupation		
Male employed, 16 years old and over	270	
Professional, technical and kindred workers	26	9.63
Managers and administrators, except farm	---	
Sales workers	---	
Clerical and kindred workers	---	
Craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers	36	13.33
Operatives, including transport	90	33.33
Laborers, except farm	24	8.88
Farmers and farm managers	33	12.22
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	---	
Farm laborers, except unpaid and farm foremen	31	11.48
Service workers, including private household	30	11.11
Female employed 16 years old and over	136	
Professional, technical and kindred workers	15	11.03
Managers and administrators, except farm	27	19.85
Sales workers	---	
Clerical and kindred workers	19	13.97
Operatives, including transport	39	28.68
Other blue-collar workers	---	
Farmers and farm managers	---	
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	---	
Farm laborers, except unpaid and farm foremen	---	
Service workers, except private household	8	5.88
Private household workers	28	20.59
Average Income	$8,118 =	
Income Less Than Poverty		
Families	102	
%	28.2	
mean income deficit	$1,341 =	